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**(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE**  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

April 3, 1968

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Dear John:

This is in reply to your memorandum of March 29, 1968 relating to the GIANT SCALE photography. I would also like to reply to your letter to me of March 13, 1968 regarding both the photographic processing and the manner in which the GIANT SCALE program will be responsive to USIB collection requirements.

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In a memorandum of March 13, 1968 to the Chairman of COMIREX, [ ] DIA Member of COMIREX, affirmed that USIB requirements for Southeast Asia coverage would be handled by the DIA in substantially the same manner as in other programs under the control of the Joint Reconnaissance Center (JRC). I believe that this should satisfactorily meet national intelligence collection needs.

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With regard to processing, GIANT SCALE reconnaissance film products initially follow the production route established for support of BLACK SHIELD. Original negative processing and priority duplication for NPIC, CIA and DIA and all Pacific Theatre users, will be performed at [ ] an NRO certified and supported facility. This procedure is exactly parallel to that used in the BLACK SHIELD operation. However, thereafter the GIANT SCALE original negative is returned by way of the 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Beale AFB, California, for the reproduction of five additional film duplicates for ZI users. In the BLACK SHIELD program the film is sent from [ ] to Eastman Kodak. However, I do not believe that the processing of additional film duplicates is in any way a critical step in the overall procedure, and it does not compromise the early availability of photography to NPIC on a priority basis.

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25X1 **NRO and DIA review(s)**

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With regard to the various informal judgments and assessments which have been made of the photography from the one GIANT SCALE mission which has so far been conducted and the attempts to compare these results with BLACK SHIELD material, I believe we should proceed with some caution. As you are aware, the mission was flown in marginal weather and the aircraft was not able to return to home base at the end of the mission, with the result that the film remained on board for a longer period than normal under conditions of high temperature which are not very conducive to maintaining the quality of film. However, in spite of this, I am informed that where weather conditions were locally good, the quality of photography was comparable to that obtained in earlier tests of the SR-71 camera systems.

It is my belief that we do not now have any data which would invalidate the findings of the NICE GIRL comparison tests, which were presented to the ExCom. You will recall that in those tests the operational objective camera (OOC), which is the main panoramic camera on the SR-71, performed in a manner which was judged to provide intelligence readouts comparable to those of the OXCART camera, although with a swath width of 23 miles, as against 62 miles for the OXCART camera. The technical objectives camera (TOC), which can be used to extend the swath width by about 7 miles on each side, did not perform well and provided only a limited capability, well below design specifications. The fragmentary reports on the GIANT SCALE photographic material which have reached me do not distinguish between the products of the OOC and the TOC. This certainly must be done if we are to understand the evaluations which are being made. In order to assist in the NPIC evaluation of the GIANT SCALE photography, I have suggested that the original negatives be made available to them by DIA, which is currently in possession of these materials.

Overall, although we certainly should learn all we can by study and analysis of the product of the one GIANT SCALE mission completed thus far, I do not believe we can arrive at

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any new conclusions regarding the comparability of GIANT SCALE and BLACK SHIELD photography on the basis of that one mission. Unfortunately, the weather over North Vietnam has been singularly uncooperative in providing conditions suitable for additional GIANT SCALE missions. However, as I stated above, there is no reason on the basis of results obtained so far, to believe that the conclusions of the NICE GIRL tests are not valid. These conclusions, as you will recall, were that the intelligence content derivable from the SR-71 OOC were comparable with that obtained from the OXCART cameras; the quality and intelligence content of photography from the SR-71 TOC, which provide a swath extension of some 14 miles, were marginal and below specifications.

Sincerely,

*al*

Alexander H. Flax

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